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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2006

#### In Today's Papers

##### Turkish Parliament to Discuss EU Reforms

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others: The Turkish Parliament is to hold an extraordinary meeting Tuesday to discuss EU harmonization reforms. Article 301 will not be raised at the assembly meeting although the EU had earlier asked in a letter to Foreign Minister Gul to amend or abolish the controversial provision, which is seen as a new tool for punishing free speech. Radikal emphasizes that the penalty given to Armenian editor Hrant Dink for violating Article 301 by "insulting Turkishness" did not make the AKP government move. EU officials have earlier warned that the upcoming EU Turkey progress report would contain strong warnings with regard to free speech.

Meanwhile, Turkey's elite business group TUSIAD warned in a report to the government, bureaucrats and lawmakers that a failure to change Article 301 would negatively affect Turkey's ties with the EU, adding that the EU was closely watching the prosecution of Turkish intellectuals under Article 301. Renowned author Elif Safak goes on trial on September 21 for "insulting Turkishness" in her new novel, just a few days before the EU kicks off discussing the Turkey progress report, TUSIAD stressed.

##### Baghdad Bans PKK Activities in Iraq

Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others report the Iraqi Government has decided to close the PKK offices in Iraq, banning all of its activities. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's Office said in a statement many countries consider the PKK a terrorist organization, and that the Iraqi Constitution does not allow terrorist organizations on Iraqi territory. Vatan says that "concrete steps" were taken after the US Special Envoy for Countering the PKK, Joseph Ralston, conveyed Turkey's uneasiness to the regional Kurdistan government president Barzani and al-Maliki during a visit to Iraq over the weekend.

##### Gul Meets the Press in New York

All papers: Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said at a breakfast meeting with press in New York that Turkey has excellent relations with Israel and Palestine. "Israel's security will be established once the Palestinian problem is resolved," noted Gul, offering a two-state formula to that end. Gul said the issue of Iran's nuclear program should be resolved through diplomacy. Gul maintained regarding Iraq "the Iraqi people will hold the coalition powers responsible if their country disintegrates; in this framework, the United States supports the territorial integrity and political unity of Iraq." Responding to a question concerning the lawsuits filed against Turks commenting on Armenian matters, Gul stated that the Turkish government has broken many taboos, and the issue was freely discussed in the country. "The legal process with regard to Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code has not been completed yet. We are for the expression of all ideas as long as they do not support violence," said Gul. Gul also stressed that Turkey's membership talks with the European Union would take a long time. "At the end of negotiations, Turkey will be a very different country, which, by then, might not want to join the EU," Gul noted.

#### Erdogan Addresses Turkic States Congress

All papers report Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said the Turkic states cannot afford to remain as passive observers to global change, urging them to grab opportunities. Addressing the 10th Turkic States Brotherhood and Cooperation Congress in the Mediterranean city of Antalya yesterday, Erdogan called for a new organization to represent the world's Turkish-speaking states, citing the British Commonwealth as an example. Erdogan expressed Turkey's support to Turkish Cyprus as well as Crimean, Meskhetian, Iraqi and Gagauz Turks. Trade between Turkey and Turkic republics is increasing, Erdogan said, adding the "Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline was open, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline will

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be open soon, and a project on Kars-Ahilkalek-Tbilisi-Baku railway will kick off next year." Erdogan also suggested the establishment of a "Turkish Speaking States Community."

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev told the gathering that his country would not allow an Armenia to be established on Azerbaijani territory. He said Armenians also demand land from Turkey. Aliyev also met with Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat.

#### Al-Kadi Court Case

Sabah, Cumhuriyet and others: The withdrawal of appeal initiated by the Prime Ministry in the controversial court case for Saudi businessman Al-Kadi may not be accepted by the Danistay, according to Danistay sources. So far, the MFA, which had filed for an appeal at the same time with the Prime Ministry, did not ask to withdraw their request. Earlier, the Danistay had struck down a decision by the government freezing Al-Kadi's assets and recognizing him as a sponsor of terror. The Prime Ministry's Legal Affairs Office then submitted an appeal of the decision without the Prime Minister's knowledge. On Friday when the PM learned about the appeal, he ordered it withdrawn and fired the Legal Office Director.

Editorial Commentary on PM Erdogan's Upcoming Visit to the US Fehmi Kuru, an influential columnist close to the ruling AK Party, writing from Washington in the mass appeal Yeni Safak sees a motive behind the recent goodwill gestures from Washington to Ankara: "The US has been making some favorable gestures to Turkey and they have all coincided on the eve of PM Erdogan's visit. Most significant was the visit of General Ralston to Ankara to discuss the fight against the PKK. With this visit Washington was giving a message that it respects Turkey's top priority issue. In addition, the White House announcement of Erdogan's visit mentioned the PKK issue -- another gesture of the US administration. The US has so far not been willing to discuss the PKK issue at the White House level. There is a reason for all of this: President Bush wants to be closer to Turkey especially as part of his expanded strategy in the fight against terror. He is planning new tactics against Iran and in the eyes of Washington, Turkey must be on the same side as the US. As part of the plan, it is hoped that Turkey will be a part of an anti-Iran frontline. Therefore Erdogan's visit to Washington is becoming a highly risky thing for Turkey. In the midst of such tough issues it will be a challenge to leave the White House in a

win-win situation."

Asli Aydintasbas, in the mass appeal Sabah, comments on the speculation that Erdogan's ambition to become President is one of his motivations for the trip: "PM Erdogan's upcoming visit to Washington has brought up the speculations that he will try to get a 'US visa' for his goal to become a president in the next term. Defenders of this argument believe that Erdogan will use every positive image during his meeting at the White House in order to demonstrate his leadership qualities as part of a domestic political campaign. In fact this argument is not meaningful because a visit to the White House always presents a warm and cordial image regardless of the visitor. Besides there is no single voice in Washington circles regarding Erdogan's goal for presidency. Some believe that his being president might lead to more tension in Turkey. Some others, including Rice are said to think that the presidency issue has nothing to do with the US, and it is an internal matter for Turkey. The fact of the matter is that in the end, the presidency issue will be discussed and decided by the parliament of Turkey."

#### Rich-Poor Gap Growing in Turkey

Radikal reports on its front page that official data exposed a yawning gap between the richest and poorest in Turkey. The richest spend 17 times more than their poorest compatriots on education, 11 times more on health, and 11.3 times more on culture and entertainment. The richest 20 percent of Turks account for 40.8 percent on health and 57.1 on education spending while the poorest

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20 percent spend 9.2 and 3.2 respectively, according to the 2005 Household Spending Survey commissioned by Turkey Statistics Institution.

#### TV Highlights

NTV (8 A.M.)

#### Domestic News

- Turkey will send a delegation to New York next week to discuss the details of the Turkish peacekeeping mission in Lebanon.
- Opposition parties UBP and DP have decided to veto parliamentary meetings in Turkish Cyprus in reaction to the political crisis sparked by the collapse of the CTP-DP coalition government, allegedly through intervention by Turkey's ruling AK Party.
- UN Development Program (UNDP) head Kemal Dervis said Turkey had pursued the right borrowing policies and managed to improve its debt structure, adding Turkey still had to take measures to reduce the current deficit.
- World Bank Regional Vice President for Europe and Central Asia, Shigeo Katsu, said Turkey's strong economy had given a fast response to market turmoil.

#### International News

- TIME magazine claims the United States might be preparing for war against Iran.
- European Commission spokesman Johannes Laitenberger criticized "disproportionate reactions" to Pope Benedict XVI's controversial remarks on Islam as anger and protests in the Muslim world continue.

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WILSON